



Ethnopharmacology, food production, nutrition and biodiversity conservation: Towards a sustainable future for indigenous peoples

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Abstract:

ETHNOPHARMACOLOGICAL RELEVANCE: It is becoming increasingly clear that ethnopharmacology cannot be disassociated from food production, human nutrition and the conservation of the biodiversity that constitutes its resource base. **AIM OF THE STUDY:** This paper aims to provide a perspective of ethnopharmacology that explicitly extends the range of disciplines it covers so as to embrace food and nutrition and the biodiversity basis, both wild and agricultural, and also places it in the context of the dramatic changes to our planet that we are experiencing during a period of rapid global change and the impacts that these changes are having on human health and nutrition and on its resource base.

MATERIALS and METHODS: A review is made of recent initiatives and developments that show linkages between ethnopharmacology, agriculture, food production, nutrition and biodiversity conservation.

RESULTS: Ethnopharmacology, biodiversity, agriculture, food and nutrition are inextricably linked but suffer from compartmentalization and a lack of communication which have to be overcome if progress is to be made. Fortunately, a convergence of interest between the agricultural biodiversity and the biodiversity conservation sectors has emerged in recent years and there is an increased appreciation of the need to adopt a wider approach to human nutrition than the conventional agricultural model allows; there is also a greater awareness of the important role played by diversity of crops, especially local species, and consumption of wild species in achieving balanced nutrition. An increased recognition of the key role of local communities in managing agricultural biodiversity is evident. While ethnopharmacologists have expressed concern at the relentless loss of biodiversity, there has been little direct involvement but it is perhaps now time to consider a more proactive role. Attention is also drawn to the need to assess the implications of global change for ethnopharmacology. **CONCLUSIONS:** Ethnopharmacologists need to take much more cognizance of the fate of the resource base - the plants, animals and microorganisms - and of the actions being undertaken under the auspices of treaties, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, to counter its degradation and loss. In addition, they should play a more active role in determining the actions needed to assess, monitor and conserve the resource base. Although it has been suggested that the 'golden days' of ethnopharmacology may be over, it is proposed that by embracing the challenges of broadening the remit so as to include the health aspects of wild biodiversity employed in nutrition, a new 'golden age' beckons. The paper concludes with some suggestions for action.

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Resource Description

Communication: 

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal



resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change;
surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Policymaker, Researcher

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Ecosystem Changes

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Global or Unspecified

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Adaption/Mitigation):

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with
greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

General Health Impact

Intervention:

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status, Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup: Indigenous peoples

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Review

Resilience: ☒

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified